

## Article

# Natural Theology and Neo-Confucianism in Timothy Richard and Ren Tingxu's Translation of Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man*

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**Abstract:** Voltaire praised Alexander Pope's poem, *An Essay on Man*, as a magnificent and profound philosophical work that garnered widespread popularity and had a significant impact. It was believed that the poem's philosophical concepts were influenced by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who drew inspiration from Jesuit writings and regarded Neo-Confucianism as China's "natural theology". In December 1897, Yan Fu translated six lines from Pope's poem into Chinese as a part of his translation of *Tianyan lun*. Subsequently, Timothy Richard and Ren Tingxu collaborated for five months to translate *An Essay on Man* into Chinese, known as *Tianlun shi* (A Poem of Heavenly Ethics), which was published in mid-summer 1898. This Chinese translation became the first extensive Western poem to be translated into Chinese. It consisted of four parts, with over 1300 lines in its original form and approximately 17,200 Chinese characters in translation. Ren rendered Pope's heroic couplets into a quatrain-style Chinese poem. The term "Tianlun" (Heavenly Ethic) was derived from Young John Allen's theory, which aimed to supplement Confucian ethics by illustrating the "man and heaven" (or "man and God") relationship. The poem successfully intertwined Christian and Confucian ideas, harmoniously blending the two discourses of natural theology and Neo-Confucianism. Ren's literary embellishments played a significant role in this remarkable achievement. Richard and Ren's translation of the poem served various purposes, including introducing Western knowledge to China and promoting political reform.

**Keywords:** Alexander Pope; *An Essay on Man*; *Tianlun shi* (A Poem of Heavenly Ethics); Timothy Richard



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## 1. Introduction

The Chinese translation of Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man* constituted a significant event in the history of Western poetry translation in China. During the onset of political reform in the Qing Court in 1898, the British missionary Timothy Richard (1845–1919) collaborated for five months with his Chinese literary assistant Ren Tingxu (1851–?) to translate Pope's philosophical poem *An Essay on Man* into Chinese. Richard had spent years collecting Pope's books, eagerly seeking to introduce Western poetry to Chinese readers and highlight the brilliance of European poets (Pope 1898, preface). With Ren's assistance, the translation, titled *Tianlun shi* 天倫詩 ("A Poem of Heavenly Ethics"), was published by the Christian Literature Society in Shanghai. Ren adhered to the Chinese poetic style, employing quatrain rhymes, and was dedicated to editing and refining the work. Richard and Ren's collaborative translation work not only introduced Pope's philosophical ideas and observations on human nature to Chinese readers but also skillfully incorporated Chinese Confucian terminology in the process. Although the Chinese translation did not closely adhere to the original text, it was released in May 1898, coinciding with the Qing court's initiation of reforms. Notably, Yan Fu (1854–1921), a renowned translator and thinker, had serialized *Tianyan lun* 天演論, his Chinese translation of Thomas Henry Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, in a journal in Tianjin five months before the publication of this translation,

which included a translation of Pope's six-line passage from *An Essay on Man* in the literary genre of Chinese five-character poems (Huxley 2014, pp. 101–2).<sup>1</sup> It is possible that Yan Fu's translation inspired Richard's translation of Pope's work, and the prevailing political climate may have played a role in reviving the translation after a prolonged period of dormancy.

Presently, the book *Tianlun Shi* is exceedingly elusive to obtain. Merely a handful of university libraries, such as Peking University Library, possess a copy of it. Unfortunately, these libraries do not offer electronic copies or photocopying services. The sole means of accessing the book is by physically visiting the library, where readers are under surveillance by cameras, and photography is strictly forbidden. Consequently, only a limited number of individuals have had the chance to read this book, resulting in a scarcity of research on the subject.

Previous research on the Chinese translation of *An Essay on Man* has provided a preliminary understanding of the text; however, there remains a significant gap in terms of analyzing the specific details of the translation. Early studies conducted by scholars such as Liu Shusen and Luo Wenjun shed some light on this translation. In 1998, Liu Shusen was the first researcher to study the translation and proposed that it marked the beginning of Chinese translations of English poetry (Liu 1998, pp. 1–2). After conducting thorough archival and documentary research, Liu made an additional discovery in 2001. It was revealed that the American missionary Young John Allen (1836–1907) had been the first to translate two lines of the poem, which were published in *Wanguo Gongbao* 萬國公報 (*The Globe Magazine*) in 1896, making it the earliest known Chinese translation of English poetry (Liu 2001, p. 365).<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Luo Wenjun explored Richard's translation strategy and the various revisions made during the translation process (Luo 2016, pp. 116–43). Nonetheless, further research is required to delve deeply into the discourse on natural theology and Neo-Confucianism in *Tianlun shi*. These two aspects are crucial to the text and the context, showcasing the remarkable fusion of Chinese and Western cultures and signifying the potential for creating a new culture through this unprecedented blend of cultures.

This article examines more closely the discourse on natural theology and Neo-Confucianism found in *Tianlun shi*. The translation process involved integrating two distinct discourse systems, with natural theology originating from Pope's poem and Richard and Ren utilizing Chinese philosophical discourse to convey it. In the following discussion, I examine Richard and Ren's translations of key concepts from the original text, including the depiction of a vision of world order, and explore how they translated this vision into Chinese philosophical discourse. Finally, I consider Richard's translation goals and seek to understand the significance of *Tianlun shi* in the cultural context of the late Qing dynasty.

## 2. The Order of the Infinite World and the Great Chain of Being

Pope's *An Essay on Man* closely examines a wide array of subjects, including contemporary philosophies, theologies, and modern sciences, while also recognizing the profound influence of Newton's physics. These themes were intertwined with the political and philosophical landscape of the 18th century. Esteemed philosophers including Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Kant hailed Pope as a leading English poet of his time. Both Voltaire's philosophical novel *Candide* (Voltaire 1759) and Kant's cosmological vision were directly influenced by *An Essay on Man* (Lovejoy 1964, p. 357, n. 24). Pope believed that his poem expressed timeless ideas, even though the philosophical and theological concepts presented were not original to him. Instead, they eventually became the prevailing trends of his era, with natural theology taking center stage. Unlike biblical hermeneutics, which emphasizes God's revelation, natural theology posits that one can discover and understand God's existence through reason. In early modern Britain, notable thinkers such as Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), Charles Blount (1563–1606), John Locke (1632–1704), John Toland (1670–1722), and Matthew Tindal (1657–1733) made significant contributions to the discourse of Deism. Though their specific viewpoints varied, several of these thinkers emphasized the concept that God created the immutable nature of both the

universe and human beings, which could be understood through reason (Nohara 2011, pp. 105–7). Ever since its publication, *An Essay on Man* has remained a subject of continuous controversy, receiving both widespread praise and significant criticism. Whereas Samuel Johnson, Pope's student, praised many of his mentor's poems, excluding this particular one, Voltaire held it in high esteem, proclaiming it to be "the most beautiful, the most useful, the most sublime didactic poem ever written in any language" (Voltaire 2003, p. 147).

During the 19th century, the Protestant missionary enterprise in China was heavily influenced by natural theology. John K. Fairbank observed that, following the collapse of the Canton System in 1834, merchants became involved in the publishing industry and collaborated with missionaries to produce numerous secular works under the Society for the Diffusion of Practical Knowledge in China (Barnett and Fairbank 1985, p. 4). This trend continued until the late 19th century, when Protestant missionaries such as Timothy Richard and William A. P. Martin (1827–1916) recognized that China lacked the foundation for a modern civilization akin to those in Europe and America, making it challenging to accept Christianity. Consequently, they began introducing a significant number of secular works covering Western science, technology, history, and geography. However, their motivations were multifaceted. I argue that Protestant missionaries in China were influenced by natural theology, as evidenced by the extensive publication of secular works guided by their beliefs. From Robert Morrison's arrival in China in the early 19th century to the involvement of Timothy Richard and W. A. P. Martin in the late Qing reform movement, all of these Protestant missionaries operated within the realm of natural theology. In the 19th century, while devoted to spreading Christianity and gaining converts, they also contributed to revitalizing Chinese civilization and integrating it into the modern nation-state system. Though their primary goal was spiritual, they did not hesitate to employ secular means to achieve their aims. As a result, numerous secular works were published by missionary publishing houses in Hong Kong, Macau, Guangzhou, and Shanghai.

Pope's *An Essay on Man* is fairly lengthy, comprising more than 1300 lines. Nevertheless, its Chinese translation, *Tianlun shi*, is substantially longer, with 4300 lines of four-character verses, amounting to a total of 17,200 Chinese characters. This translation is the first poem from the Western world to be completely translated into Chinese (Liu 2001, p. 365). Before this, only a handful of lines of poetry had been rendered or rewritten by Western missionaries in China and Sinologists in the West. However, these translations were often deemed too rudimentary to be considered actual poetry.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, these translations were limited to a structure of either five or seven Chinese characters, and they were therefore lacking in poetic quality. In contrast, *Tianlun shi* represents a complete and intricate four-character-long poem, making it one of the few examples of such a translation in the 19th to 20th centuries.

In the Chinese translation, the term "tianlun" 天倫 appears solely in the preface and concluding lines of the text. Although no further explanation was provided by either Richard or Ren, it was typically translated to mean "the Heavenly Ethics", encompassing ideas related to the relationship between humanity and the transcendental heaven. Pope's poem focuses on the vision of cosmic order, particularly as connected to "the Great Chain of Being". The translators of the Chinese version placed a greater emphasis on the relationship between humanity and God, with "Heavenly ethics" taking center stage instead of Confucianism's focus on human ethics. It is worth noting that the term related to "tianren" 天人 is only mentioned once in the summary of Chapter 1, section 8 in *Tianlun shi*. This section explores the idea that the order among human relationships and objects signifies a larger order in the universe. When translated, the Chinese text "論人物有次序, 推之天人亦然" states that there is a certain order in the hierarchy of people and things, and this hierarchy is also reflected in the order of heaven and man. The term "tianren" 天人 reflects the cosmic order of Confucian thought, but it is used as a hypothetical equivalent for Pope's concept of "universal order".

In the late 19th century, Protestant missionaries introduced a new concept called "heavenly ethics" (tianlun), which complemented the Confucian "Five Cardinal Relation-

ships" (wulun 五倫). This approach was not new, as the missionaries' predecessors had already introduced a similar concept in the 17th century. Alfonso Vagnoni (1566–1640), an Italian Jesuit missionary, wrote a book called *Dadao Jiyan* 達道紀言 (*The Record of Words for Attaining the Way*, 1636) (Vagnoni 1972), which contained three hundred stories introducing ethical views that were consistent with Christianity and complemented Confucianism. According to Thierry Meynard's analysis, the Western rhetoric and discourse of that time, as seen in *Dadao Jiyan*, marked the emergence of a new ethical order that diverged from traditional Chinese culture (Meynard 2010, pp. 388–406; Meynard 2013, pp. 219–34). Protestant missionaries adopted a similar method as their Catholic predecessors by incorporating Confucianism into Christian theology through the concept of "heavenly ethics". This approach involved translating and retelling Western stories to supplement and enhance Confucian ethics. The American Methodist Young John Allen was one of the missionaries who employed this approach by translating and editing a book called *Anrenche* 安仁車 (first serialized in *The Globe Magazine*, 1891–1892; later published as a book in 1902). The book included fifty stories supporting Allen's idea of spreading Christianity by incorporating Confucianism and supplementing it with Christian concepts (Allen 1869–1870, No. 64, pp. 9–11; Yao 2018, pp. 271–93). In *Anrenche*, Allen emphasized the importance of the relationship between man and God, which can be categorized as "heavenly ethics". He replaced Confucianism's focus on "ren" 仁 (benevolence) with Christianity's emphasis on "love". Richard and Ren also adopted this approach in their translation of *Tianlun shi*. Both *Anrenche* and *Tianlun shi* were edited and embellished by the same scholar, Ren Tingxu, a Chinese literary assistant who shared Allen's belief in the superiority of Christian "love" over Confucian "benevolence".

I was involved in editing and annotating the book *Tianlun shi* with a view to publishing it. Copies of this book have become increasingly scarce over time, and my goal is to make it more accessible to others. When examining the text, I conducted a word frequency analysis of several significant keywords. These keywords include "di" 帝 (God), "shen" 神 (spirit), "li" 理 (reason), "dao" 道 (way), "xing" 性 (nature), "xin" 心 (heart), "ren" 仁 (benevolence), "ai" 愛 (love), "xu" 序 (order), and "lu" 律 (law).

Here are the findings from the word frequency analysis:

- (1) The Chinese character "帝" appears 85 times in the text, with twelve instances referring to earthly emperors (huangdi 皇帝) and the remaining 73 cases indicating the transcendent theological concept of God. For example, see the couplet "方知造物，實惟上帝" (Now I realize that the Creator, the one and only, is supreme god/God).<sup>4</sup>
- (2) The Chinese character "神" appears 30 times, generally referring to deities other than the Creator God. The translators deliberately distinguished between two Chinese characters: "帝" refers to the Creator God, and "神" refers to other deities. For example, see the couplets "為人不足，反欲為神。為神不足，更欲為帝" (As humans, we are not content and instead desire to become gods. Yet, even as gods, we are still unsatisfied and strive to become even closer to being the Creator God).
- (3) The Chinese character "理" appears 84 times, with three instances referring to "management" or "governance" by God over all people and lands. The other 81 occurrences include various phrases such as "daoli" 道理 (reason or principle), "yili" 義理 (moral principles), "dingli" 定理 (theorem), "zhenli" 真理 (truth), "tianli" 天理 (heavenly reason or divine justice), and "ziran zhili" 自然之理 (laws of nature), which signify the fundamental rules, principles, or universal truths. Ten instances of the term "tianli," which serves as the fundamental cosmological concept of "lixue" 理學 (Neo-Confucianism), can be found throughout the text. These terms relate to the truths expressed by Pope, and a significant portion contains content related to natural theology.
- (4) The Chinese character "道" (Dao or Way) appears 95 times, with the term "daoxin" 道心 (Dao heart, or the heart of the way) from Neo-Confucianism appearing 13 times. This indicates the significance of critical terms within the text, giving it a strong Confucian flavor.

- (5) The Chinese character “性” appears 48 times, mainly in reference to concepts such as “benxing” 本性 (innate nature), “renxing” 人性 (human nature), “xingqing” 性情 (temperament), “wuxing” 物性 (the nature of the things), “tianxing” 天性 (natural disposition), and “xinxing” 心性 (mental disposition).
- (6) The Chinese character “心” (heart or mind) appears 196 times, with vocabulary such as “jiushi poxin” 救世婆心 (the merciful heart for saving the world), “tianxin” 天心 (the heart of heaven), “shangdi zhixin” 上帝之心 (the heart of God), and “renxin zhixing” 人心之性 (the nature of the human heart). Among them, the term “tianxin” 天心 appears 12 times, and “renxin” 人心 (the heart of humans) appears 31 times. Additionally, there are some related terms such as “renxin zhixing” (the nature of the human heart), “renxin bugu” 人心不古 (the hearts of people are not like that of the ancient people), and “renxin qingyu” 人心情欲 (the desires of the human heart).
- (7) The Chinese character “仁” (benevolence) is a critical term in Confucianism and appears 19 times in the text. There are meaningful terms associated with it, such as “shangdi haoren” 上帝好仁 (God’s benevolence), “renxin” 仁心 (benevolent heart), and “ren’ai” 仁愛 (benevolence and love).
- (8) The Chinese character “愛” (love) appears 60 times and includes keywords such as “pu’ai” 普愛 (universal love), “ren’ai” 仁愛 (benevolence and love), “aishi” 愛世 (love the world), “airen” 愛人 (love others), “ziai” 自愛 (self-love), and “aiwu” 愛物 (love things). Among them, the term “ziai” 自愛 (self-love) appears 18 times. “Love” is not typically emphasized in traditional Chinese beliefs, but it holds a significant place in this context.
- (9) The related terms that include the Chinese character “序”, meaning “order” or “sequence”, appear 17 times, including terms such as “cixu” 次序 (sequence), “zhixu” 秩序 (order), and other related keywords.
- (10) The Chinese character “律” (law) appears 17 times, including keywords like “lufa” 律法 (law), “gonglu” 公律 (universal rule), “dinglu” 定律 (principle), “tianding zhilu” 天定之律 (the laws of heaven), and “shangdi dinglu” 上帝定律 (the laws of God), as well as other related terms.

The examined keywords, namely “帝” (God), “神” (spirit), “理” (reason), “道” (way), “性” (nature), “心” (heart), “仁” (benevolence), “愛” (love), “序” (order), and “律” (law), hold significant conceptual associations within the context of both Neo-Confucianism and natural theology. “理,” “道,” “性,” “心,” and “仁” were fundamental principles in Neo-Confucianism that shaped moral conduct and the social order, whereas “帝,” “神,” and “愛” were linked to Christianity and the concept of a divine entity. “序,” “律,” and “道,” on the other hand, emphasized the notion of universal order and the governing laws of the world, being connected to natural theology. It is important to acknowledge that the proposed classification approach may seem arbitrary, and it is natural for there to be exceptions. Consequently, a deeper analysis of specific texts is required. Hence, it becomes imperative to present additional translated lines of poetry and analyze related passages to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

These keywords, related to two sets of discourse, offer valuable perspectives on the interactions between various philosophical, religious, and ethical concepts. This analysis has highlighted their significance in comprehending and interpreting diverse intellectual traditions and belief systems within the Late Qing era translated text and its context.

The principle of “the Chain of Being” categorizes all existence based on levels of perfection. This hierarchical system ranks God at the top, followed by angels, humans, animals, and other species in the natural world. It highlights the harmony and interconnectedness of the universe, underscoring the interdependence of and connections between various entities throughout the system. In *Tianlun shi*, at least eight instances closely correspond with this concept. For the purpose of a more comprehensive comparative analysis, I will present Pope’s original poem, the Chinese translation, and my reverse translation as follows.



- (1) “Is the great chain, that draws all to agree, // and drawn supports, upheld by God, or thee?” (I, 33–34) 大千世界，一鏈相連。帝乎人乎，孰執其端？(1, 1).<sup>5</sup> (The vast world is intricately interconnected with a single chain.)
- (2) “How much farther this order and subordination of living creatures may extend, above and below us; were any part of which broken, not that part only, but the whole connected creation must be destroyed” (Pope 2016, p. 5). 論人物有次序，推之天人亦然，千尋鐵鏈，缺一環即不能成，五洲萬民，錯一事皆失其序 (1, 8). (The hierarchy of people and things follows a specific order, which is also reflected in the order of heaven and man. This order can be likened to an infinitely long iron chain, in which the completeness of the chain relies on every link. A single misstep can disrupt the order across the five continents and countless individuals.)
- (3) “Vast chain of being, which from God began...” (I, 237). 萬萬生靈，如同大鏈。萬環相連，帝握其端 (1, 8). (Countless living beings resemble a grand chain, with innumerable links intertwined, while God holds the ultimate end.)
- (4) “On superior pow’rs // Were we to press, inferior might on ours: // Or in the full creation leave a void, // Where, one step broken, the great scale’s destroy’d: // From Nature’s chain whatever link you strike, // Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.” (I, 241–246). 從上帝起，至於下民，從有形起，至於無象，天地人物，一鏈相連，皆有次序，不可錯亂。人若占神，物亦占人。一環偶錯，全環俱乖 (1, 8). (From God to the lowest subjects, and from the tangible to the formless, the heavens, earth, and humans are interconnected in a chain, each with its own sequence that cannot be disrupted. When humans occupy divinity, creatures also occupy humanity. If a link is accidentally misplaced, the entire chain becomes disjointed.)
- (5) “Look round our World; behold the chain of Love // Combining all below and all above” (III, 7–8). 大地如球，張目四望，上至天帝，下至萬物，莫非愛心，一鏈相連 (3, 1). (With eyes wide open, surveying all directions, the Earth unveils its spherical nature. From the heavenly God above to all things below, they are ultimately interconnected by love, forming a chain.)
- (6) “Nothing is foreign: Parts relate to whole; // One all- extending, all- preserving Soul // Connects each being, greatest with the least ” (III, 21–23). 天生萬物，無一不連，如同大鏈，環節萬千。決無一節，不關全體 (3, 1). (All things in nature are interconnected without exception, resembling a Great Chain with countless links. No single link can exist independently without affecting the entirety.)
- (7) “All serv’d, all serving! nothing stands alone; // The chain holds on, and where it ends, unknown ” (III, 25–26). 人養萬物，萬物養人。相助相資，誰能獨立？此等大鏈，貫澈兩端 (3, 1). (Humans nourish all things, and all things nurture humans. They mutually support and rely on each other, as no one can stand alone. This Great Chain spans from end to end.)
- (8) “But looks thro’ Nature, up to Nature’s God; // Pursues that Chain which links th’im- mense design” (IV, 332–333). 善人深知，天地萬物，皆與上帝，一鏈相連 (4, 7). (Wise individuals deeply understand that heaven, earth, and all things are all linked to God.)

These references in *Tianlun shi* demonstrate a consistent portrayal of the Chain of Being, emphasizing the interconnectedness and unity of all entities within the cosmic order. To Pope, the world is a flawless system where everything exists in its rightful place. Consequently, he emphasized the orderly nature of all things in the world, extending beyond mere interactions between heaven and humanity. Similarly, Richard recognized the interconnectedness of all worldly beings, describing it as “the iron chain of infinite length” 千尋鐵鏈. However, he particularly underscored the significance of the relationship between heaven and humanity.

With Richard’s acceptance of natural theology and belief in the interconnectedness of all things in the universe, he had a compelling responsibility to assist China and promote political reform. He even took on the task of rewriting other religions to align them with his own acceptable religious model. This explains why Richard, during the late 19th and

early 20th centuries, translated works such as *Journey to the West* and Buddhist scriptures, adapting them into a new religion reminiscent of Protestantism. Consequently, Richard was open to the coexistence of different religions while striving to construct a new religion centered around Christianity. In his preface to *Tianlun shi*, Richard referenced the original author's intention of saving the world and expressed hope that this text would "reveal the Way through the text and unite hearts to save the world" 因文見道，同心救世, embodying this purpose. The discussion presented here reflects Richard's perspective.

Ren's editing and textual refinement were pivotal in completing *Tianlun shi*. He showcased his cultural awareness by incorporating Confucian rhetoric imbued with Neo-Confucian principles and facilitated a seamless integration of natural theology and Neo-Confucian thought. Through Ren's contributions, the Western concept of "the Chain of Being" in natural theology found resonance within the discourse of Song–Ming Neo-Confucianism. The collaborative effort between Timothy Richard and Ren Tingxu resulted in a harmonious fusion of these two philosophical traditions.

Despite Ren's significant contributions as a Chinese assistant and translator for Western Missionaries, he has been largely overlooked in research, making it imperative to delve deeper into his work and its importance. Beginning in 1881, Ren developed close connections with Western missionaries and worked as a translation assistant for translators like Young John Allen and Timothy Richard at the Chinese Christian Literature Society (Yang 2022, p. 127). As Patrick Hanan noted, "Almost all composition or translation by foreigners in Chinese during the nineteenth century involved teamwork with Chinese assistants" (Hanan 2003, p. 264). Chinese scholars like Ren played a crucial role in supporting Western authors or translators, making significant contributions to the completion of numerous Chinese works. However, it was customary for these scholars to remain anonymous in translations or writings, as it helped ensure their safety and maintain their personal reputation. Similarly, in many cases, although Ren assisted in polishing and finalizing the works, his name did not appear on the front page alongside the foreign translators. Through his extensive study of Christian-influenced "Western learning" works, Ren underwent a gradual conversion to Christianity, eventually being baptized in 1902 and adopting the name Paul Ren 任保羅 (Ren Baoluo). It is plausible to argue that this book, along with other Western learning works he translated, influenced his thinking and played a role in his conversion. However, I would refrain from presenting this claim as absolute in this article. At the very least, Ren demonstrated a skillful balance in translating Chinese culture and Western poetry, rendering the Chinese translations more accessible to local readers while facilitating his acceptance of foreign poetry and its ideas within his own intellectual framework.

### 3. The Universal Benevolence of All Things and the Christian Concept of Love

During the Song and Ming dynasties, Confucian scholars actively debated the tension between reason and desire, which constituted the foundation of Neo-Confucianism. However, with the Qing court established, a notable shift in perspective emerged from differentiating between these two elements to highlighting their harmonious integration. Nonetheless, this passage underscores the enduring influence of Confucian scholars throughout that era.

In Neo-Confucianism, the distinction between "tianli" 天理 (heavenly reason) and "renyu" 人欲 (human desires) is fundamental. In their renowned work known as *Yishu* 遺書 (Posthumous Writings), the prominent Neo-Confucian masters the Cheng Brothers offered a timeless explanation for this concept. According to them, the human heart could be filled with personal desires that could lead to danger, whereas the Dao heart, guided by heavenly reason, embodied subtlety. They emphasized that, when a person lets go of his desires, the clarity of the heavenly reason becomes evident (人心，私欲，故危殆；道心，天理，故精微。滅私欲，則天理明矣) (Cheng and Cheng 1981, p. 312). Thus, it is implied that reason and desire are in conflict, such as that encountered when facing a formidable enemy. However, during the late Ming Dynasty, responses to the debate between reason and desire emerged, giving rise to anti-Neo-Confucian thought. Early Qing Confucian

thinkers such as Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692), Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724–1777), and even Li Guangdi 李光地 (1642–1718), a Confucian scholar of the early Qing who represented the official position in the discussion of Neo-Confucianism at that period, reevaluated and emphasized the unity of rather than the distinction between reason and desire (Zhu 2003, pp. 472–74). With the patronage of the Kangxi Emperor, Li Guangdi compiled an influential work with his annotation, *Yuzuan xingli jingyi* 御纂性理精義 (*The Imperial Edition of the Essence of Nature and Reason*), integrating Neo-Confucianism and establishing the early Qing political ideology (Li [1715] 1850, preface; Yao 2023a, pp. 245–64). Scholars have noted that Li Guangdi's works of Neo-Confucian philosophy intertwined the "Dao heart" and the "human heart" as one. As previous scholars have pointed out: "In Li Guangdi's view, the Dao heart and the human heart were originally one. The discussion of two hearts was only in terms of their manifestations and applications" (Su and Wu 2021, pp. 150–51). In his discourse on Neo-Confucianism, Li Guangdi emphasized the interconnectedness between the human heart and the Dao heart, which went on to become a central view of the era. This view was later accepted by the Qing court and came to dominate throughout the Qing period. Protestant missionaries in the late Qing era were familiar with the works of the abovementioned renowned Confucian scholars. For instance, *The Imperial Edition of the Essence of Nature and Reason*, one of Li Guangdi's works, was included in the London Missionary Society's book collection in the 19th century. Thus, for both the Chinese literati and Protestant missionaries, the notion of the unity between the human heart and the Dao heart was not unfamiliar.

The unity between the human heart and the Dao heart is closely related to the concept of "萬物一體之仁" ("the benevolence that embraces all things as a unified entity," or "The universal benevolence of all things"). Neo-Confucianism thrived during the Song Dynasty, with influential figures such as Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) and Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077) preceding the Cheng-Zhu school of Confucian thought. Zhang Zai opens his work *ximing* 西銘 (Western Inscription) with a discussion of the order of the heavens, earth, and the universe. He stated, "Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions". (乾稱父，坤稱母；予茲藐焉，乃混然中處。故天地之塞，吾其體；天地之帥，吾其性。民，吾同胞；物，吾與也。) (Zhu 2010, p. 139; Chan 1963, p. 497). Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) commented: "What fills (the universe) is qi (the vital energy); my body embodies the energy of heaven and earth" (塞只是氣，吾之體即天地之氣), and "the word 'shuai' (direct) refers to governance, which is the constant principle of Heaven and Earth; my nature conforms to the principle of Heaven and Earth". (帥是主宰，乃天地之常理也，吾之性即天地之理。) (Zhu 2018, pp. 1909–10).

According to Zhu Xi's explanation, the principle (li) and vital energy (qi) were key factors, which were also heaven and earth's principles and vital energies. This did not imply an excessive inflation of the individual self, but rather stemmed from the understanding that people were siblings and things were of the same kind, thus constituting a unified whole. Wing-tsit Chan interpreted it to mean "treat others with familial love, benevolence towards people, and love for all things, ultimately merging with Heaven, Earth, and all things as one entity". (即親親仁民愛物，以至於與天地萬物合為一體。) (Chan 2018, p. 43). In his interpretation of the phrase "benevolence towards people, and love for all things," Chan highlighted the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of human beings and the world around them, providing guidelines for the application of "benevolence" and "love". This perspective was more expansive than the interpretations of earlier Neo-Confucian masters such as Zhang Zai and Zhu Xi and instead found its roots in Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), the philosopher of the Ming Dynasty. Neo-Confucianism placed a significant emphasis on the interconnectedness of human beings and the world around them, with the unity of all things as one entity forming the core of this theory. Wang Yangming's perspective on this concept and its relationship with benevolence was



straightforward, and the development of Neo-Confucian interpretations from the Song Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty could be viewed as a continuous progression. As Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895–1990) succinctly summarized, “‘Regarding Heaven, Earth, and all things as one unified entity’ is the spiritual essence that has been entrusted to the philosophers of Neo-Confucianism since the Northern Song Dynasty” (Qian 1997, p. 236).

The Jesuits contributed an ethical aspect to Confucianism by associating the concept of “benevolence” with “love” and emphasizing the superiority of “love” over “benevolence”. In Chinese, the concept of “tianlun” 天倫 (heavenly ethic) is the love between humans and God. Furthermore, the ideas of the “oneness of all things” and the “great Chain of Being” align between the two set of philosophies. Scholars of Neo-Confucianism interpreted “benevolence” as the benevolence encompassing all things in heaven and earth as one, whereas Christian missionaries perceived “benevolence” as “love,” the love shared between humans and God. Hence, the Great Chain of Being can also be considered as the chain of love or the “chain of benevolence”.

In *Tianlun shi*, “daoxin” 道心 (the Dao heart) is equivalent to the Christian concept of “love,” referred to by Pope as “the Chain of love” in *An Essay on Man*. In the opening lines of Chapter 3, Pope states, “Look round our World; behold the chain of Love, // Combining all below and all above” (III, 7–8) (Pope 2016, p. 25). This line is translated into Chinese as “上至天帝，下至萬物，莫非愛心，一鏈相連” (From the highest heavenly emperor to all things below, nothing exists without the heart of love, interconnected as one chain). In the subsequent lines, Pope delves deeper into the explanation of why everything in the world is interconnected through a chain. One of the assertions made is that “Heav’n’s attribute was Universal Care” (III, 159) (Pope 2016, p. 61). This line has been translated as “上帝好仁，普愛生靈” (God is benevolent and loves all living beings universally). To Richard and Ren, the “love” within this chain is synonymous with “benevolence.” In the history of Chinese philosophy, Mencius advocated for “ren” as loving others, and later, Confucian scholars extensively discussed and explained the concept of the “oneness of all things”. Wang Yangming further expanded on this idea by introducing the “ren of the oneness of all things” or the “ren of unity”. The universe is connected through “ren,” which serves as the fundamental principle of Wang’s Neo-Confucianism. However, in the context of the missionaries, “ren” was replaced with “love,” leading to the development of concepts including the “heart of love” and “heavenly heart”.

The term “tianli renyu” 天理人欲 appears three times in the book, with the final occurrence in the concluding section. The couplets in Chinese read: “天理人欲，殊途同歸，皆能益人。世人當知，真自愛者，必真愛人，理無二致。” This statement asserts that “heavenly reason” and “human desire” are two paths towards the same goal, both of which can benefit humanity. It also emphasizes the inseparability of true self-love and genuine love for others. This viewpoint contradicts the Neo-Confucian belief of “preserving heavenly reason, eliminating human desire”. Zhu Xi’s philosophy defines “human desire” as the desire for material possessions and personal pleasures, which clashes with the metaphysical concept of “heavenly reason”. According to Neo-Confucian scholars, human desire can lead to evil within human nature, whereby “heavenly reason” represents goodness and “human desire” represents evil. In the Chinese translation, the terms “renyu” 人欲 (human desire) and “qingyu” 情欲 (emotional desire) are used interchangeably in certain sections, both of which are associated with selfish behavior referred to as “self-love” or “self-interest” in Pope’s original text. Clearly, the concepts of “self-love” or “self-interest” in Pope’s ideas are not equivalent to the Chinese Confucian concept of “renyu”. The translators of the Chinese version, in reality, resorted to a conceptual substitution. Pope acknowledged the rationality of evil, which stems from an unknowable God, and believed that this world is the most perfect among all possible worlds, and evil is an inevitable part of this perfect world. Moreover, Pope’s belief that appropriate self-interest benefits the collective due to the interconnectedness of the world and the relationship between individual and collective happiness is akin to the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham

(1748–1832), a later British philosopher. Both viewpoints propose that properly directed individual self-interest can result in benefits for the collective.

It is paramount to acknowledge the significant role played by Ren Tingxu in shaping these descriptions and refinements. Their translation process deserves special recognition, as Richard effectively conveyed the essence of Pope's original poem to Ren, who skillfully translated it into Chinese, completing the initial draft. Ren then diligently refined, edited, and revised the draft, culminating in the final version, while Richard offered invaluable critical feedback and suggestions throughout this collaborative endeavor. *Tianlun shi* introduced specific Neo-Confucian terms that were absent in the original text. Nonetheless, it is yet to be determined whether Richard was fully aware of the reaction these Neo-Confucian terms would elicit from readers who were well versed in the Confucian classics. One notable addition made by the translators can be found in the second chapter of *Tianlun shi*. The following content was included: “世儒垂訓，每言人心。理欲相戰，如臨大敵。是以一心，分而為二。彼逞私智，不知其合。自詡聰明，反成愚魯。誤於名目，失其本真。豈知二心，本出一途。” (Across generations, Confucian scholars have consistently taught and extensively elaborated the intricacies of the human heart. When reason and desire clash, it is akin to facing a formidable enemy. Thus, the unity of the heart becomes divided into two. Those who indulge in personal wisdom fail to grasp its inherent harmony. Despite their self-proclaimed cleverness, they ultimately become foolish and ignorant. They become entangled in superficial distinctions, losing touch with their true essence. How could they comprehend that the two hearts stem from the same path?). This stanza explains the conflict between reason and desire, which was the central issue of Neo-Confucianism. Distinguishing between the two was the common goal of scholars from the Song and Ming dynasties. However, in the early Qing era, scholars shifted their focus from merely differentiating the two to emphasizing their integration or common origin. As a result, the couplets in this stanza demonstrate the influence of the scholarship of Neo-Confucianism by Qing scholars.

In two other instances within the second chapter, the concept of tianli (heavenly reason) is juxtaposed with human desires: (1) “天理人欲，相合併茂。道德性情，相交益善” (2, 3) (The heavenly reason and human desires harmoniously flourish. Moral nature and sentiments interact mutually for mutual improvement). (2) “欲正人心，必由帝力。天理人欲，相制不紛” (2, 4) (To rectify the human heart, one requires the power of God. Through mutual restraint, heavenly reason and human desires avoid discord). In these two instances, heavenly reason (tianli) and human desires (renyu) are depicted as mutually constraining and harmoniously benefiting each other. However, in order to rectify the human heart, the presence of “the power of God” is also deemed necessary; this term is absent in Neo-Confucian terminology.

The penultimate stanza of the poem appears to serve as the conclusion. It is clear that a metaphorical harmony exists between the two forms of discourse.

Pope's original lines are as follows:

God loves from Whole to Parts: But human soul  
Must rise from Individual to the Whole.  
Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,  
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;  
The centre mov'd, a circle strait succeeds,  
Another still, and still another spreads,  
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,  
His country next, and next all human race,  
Wide and more wide, th'o'erflowings of the mind  
Take ev'ry creature in, of ev'ry kind;  
Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,

And Heav'n beholds its image in his breast. (IV, 361–372) (Pope 2016, p. 96)

The Chinese translation of these verses is as follows:

天心仁愛，普及眾生。人心仁愛，須由漸推。  
試看春湖，波平如鏡，投以小石，即起皺紋，  
漸推漸遠，至於湖濱。愛心在人，亦復如是，  
始也親親，繼而仁民，終於愛物，由近及遠，  
同國同種，悉被其仁，血氣生靈，盡蒙其澤。  
陽春有腳，大地感恩，上天眷顧，善心所播，  
推至全地，適合天心。(4, 7)

In this section, the translation of Pope's metaphor of "casting a pebble into a lake" is rendered as "投石春湖" in *Tianlun shi*, which aligns with the Confucian perspective on love. The translator then introduces the concept of "tianxin" 天心 (the heavenly heart), which transcends the Confucian notion of "ren'ai" 仁愛 (the benevolence of the human heart). However, it is worth noting that the term "心" (heart) in "天心" and "人心" is not directly associated with any specific words in the original text but rather constitutes an interpretation on the part of the translators. The terms "tianxin" (the heavenly heart) and "renxin" (the human heart) correspond to the concepts of "God's love" and "the human soul", respectively. In their translations, Richard and Ren embarked on a creative interpretation that facilitated an effective dialogue between Confucian and Christian ideologies. Their commendable use of Chinese philosophical vocabulary, employing the assumption of equivalence to translate interconnected concepts, deserves appreciation within the historical context in which they operated.

In the preceding lines, Pope indeed wrote "Self-love thus push'd to social, to divine, Gives thee to make thy neighbour's blessing thine" (IV, 353–354), which reflects the Christian principle of "loving thy neighbor". In those lines, Pope delves into the exploration of self-love as an inherent aspect of human nature, fostering personal growth, happiness, and virtue. He emphasizes the importance of aligning individual interests with the common good, nurturing both self-fulfillment and societal well-being. Pope's verse "Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake" (IV, 363) further clarifies how self-love can awaken a "virtuous mind". When self-love is properly directed and balanced, it acts as a catalyst for developing virtuous qualities and moral consciousness. By cultivating self-love in this way, individuals become more aware of their responsibilities towards others and are motivated to act in ways that benefit not only themselves but also their communities and the greater whole. The impact of this awakening, comparable to throwing a pebble into a lake, ripples outward from the individual to encompass others and the broader community. Richard and Ren have reinterpreted this metaphor, drawing a direct parallel to the Confucian principle of "benevolence and love". However, these two translators appear to deliberately disregard the substantial differences between the universal love emphasized in Christianity and the hierarchical love in Confucianism, opting instead to cleverly pursue certain similarities in meaning.

The Confucian perspective on love exhibits a strong characteristic of hierarchical distinctions. Confucius' teachings on love place emphasis on familial love rooted in blood relationships, which then extends to encompass broader connections, in line with the evolving methodological principles of Confucianism since the time of Mencius. Mencius' statement, "老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼" (Treat with the reverence due to age the elders in your own family, so that the elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated; treat with kindness due to youth the young in your own family, so that the young in the families of others shall be similarly treated. (Legge's translation of *Mencius*.) (Legge 1895, p. 143; Yang 1960, p. 16), conveys a similar idea. The Confucian understanding of love can be described as "graded love" or "love with hierarchical distinctions," resembling a structure of concentric circles, with the closest blood ties at its core and gradually expanding outward to include those in increasingly distant relationships with oneself. The concepts of "benev-

olence," "the heart of the heavens," and "love" were more thoroughly explained in the Chinese translation, connecting theological ideas with Neo-Confucianism. The couplets in the translation distinguish between two types of love or benevolence: the "benevolence of the heavenly heart" 天心仁愛, which represents divine love in Christianity that encompasses all beings and the world, and the "benevolence of Human Heart" 人心仁愛, which corresponds to the Confucian notion of love.

At the end of Chapter 1, the translators rephrased "the great Chain of Being" as "萬物一體" (all things are one). The original lines from Pope's poem read as follows: "All are but parts of one stupendous whole, // Whose body nature is, and God the soul, // That, changed through all, and yet in all the same" (I, 267–269) (Pope 2016, p. 24). The Chinese translation reads: "萬千世界，不過一體，千萬生靈，不過萬支，一體之神，即是上帝" (The myriad worlds are but one entity, // The countless living beings are mere branches, // The divine within the unity, that is God) (1, 9). According to Tom Jones, this particular line in Pope's poem is highly controversial because it appears to embrace an ancient Stoic doctrine that regards God as the soul of the world rather than a unique, hidden, active intelligence that comprises the world (Pope 2016, p. 24). Although I agree with Jones' fundamental viewpoint, I firmly assert that this concept has a distinct origin, specifically in Plato's work *Timaeus*, particularly in his exploration of "the soul of the world" (Brisson 2020, pp. 70–71). In Neo-Confucianism, the concept of "萬物一體之仁" transcends the idea of "ren" (benevolence). This idea is expressed similarly to how Richard places "天倫," the relationship between humans and God, above the Five Relationships. The concept of oneness creates a love that surpasses benevolence and is seen as the essence of the heavenly ethic. Ren Tingxu's literary skills and cultivation of Confucian ideas were instrumental in refining the Neo-Confucian elements mentioned above. This led to the integration of theology and Neo-Confucianism within the context of Chinese Christianity, resulting in a newly created outcome.

#### 4. Constitutional Monarchy and the Nation as a Natural Deity

The reason that Timothy Richard decided to translate Pope's *An Essay on Man* remains shrouded in uncertainty. Neither Timothy Richard nor his contemporaries made explicit references to this book, and its distribution appears to have been limited. The Chinese translation itself remained relatively obscure, with only a brief mention of its existence in an advertisement by the Christian Literature Society. As a result, it is difficult to find specific historical records from the late Qing era that can provide insights into this matter. In light of these challenges, I will endeavor to explore the political environment during Pope's time to uncover the relevant evidence and propose a tentative explanation.

It is essential to explore the connection between natural theology and Neo-Confucianism. During the 17th and 18th centuries, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (Intorcetta et al. 1687; Meynard 2011) significantly impacted Europe as one of the most influential works of Sinology. This work was translated and edited by more than four Jesuits (Prosperi Intorcetta, Christiani Herdrich, François de Rougemont, and Philippi Couplet) who were based in China. These Jesuits, inspired by the teachings of Nicolò Longobardo (1559–1654), identified "li" 理 (reason) as the cosmic essence of the Chinese humanities. Longobardo argues that the concept of li in Song Dynasty Confucianism is a material principle, distinct from the Christian idea of God. As a result, he rejects Chinese Confucianism entirely, including both ancient and modern forms. However, Thierry Meynard points out, "Leibniz strived to transform Longobardo's refutation of the philosophy of li into a positive interpretation, reflecting the ancient natural theology of the Chinese. According to Leibniz, li was endowed with all possible perfections, thus becoming equivalent to the philosophical notion of God in the Western tradition" (Meynard 2017, p. 194). Though Leibniz was influenced by the ideas of Neo-Confucianism, his arguments mainly relied on the works of Jesuit missionaries to support his preexisting views. Therefore, he neither embraced Longobardo's concepts nor fully accepted the ideas of Neo-Confucianism.

Scholars during Pope's lifetime speculated on the influence of Leibniz's ideas on *An Essay on Man*, but there were also dissenting opinions. In Pope's era, the French philosopher Jean Pierre De Crousaz had already initiated criticism towards Pope for incorporating ideas from Leibniz's flawed philosophy (Brack 1995, pp. 60–84). However, this claim seems difficult to substantiate, as some scholars argue otherwise. Nonetheless, Pope's *Essay on Man* does exhibit reflections of Leibniz's philosophical concepts, potentially influenced by the prevalent intellectual climate of the Augustan age (Billingslea 2017, pp. 19, 26). Scholars speculated during Pope's lifetime that the ideas presented in *An Essay on Man* were influenced by Leibniz. Some have contended that Pope's poetic style constrained his philosophical viewpoint, thereby limiting his ability to present a comprehensive argument. Consequently, certain critics have criticized *An Essay on Man* for its lack of depth in terms of philosophical exploration, dismissing it as a mere didactic poem. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that Pope's work reflects the broader ideas and perspectives of many British intellectuals of his era, whose views were also shaped by similar ideological frameworks.

The spiritual guidance that inspired the intellectual concepts in *An Essay on Man* can be traced back to Pope's mentor, Henry Bolingbroke, to whom the poem is dedicated. Scholars have pointed out that the "Tory Cosmology" of Jonathan Swift and Pope originates in Bolingbroke's religious writings, in which God's great Chain of Being serves as a secular analogy for the rigid hierarchical order found in human society and politics (Kramnick 1967, pp. 588–89). Bolingbroke stated in his works that "Natural religion seems to have been preserved more pure and unmixed in [ancient China], than in any other [country]" (Bolingbroke 1754, p. 195)—that is, "although China degenerated into superstition and corruption after the ancient period" (Bolingbroke 1754, p. 196). Catholic missionaries in late Ming and early Qing China made similar assessments. Bolingbroke spent two periods of exile in France and resided there for several decades, engaging deeply with Enlightenment thinkers. It is highly possible that Bolingbroke encountered Leibniz's ideas of natural theology during his exile in Europe. However, there is no definitive consensus on this matter in the academic community. In short, Pope's ideas of natural theology originated from Bolingbroke, who likely came into contact with Leibniz and other scholars' notions of natural theology during his exile in Europe, forming an indirect lineage of influence.

Timothy Richard's memoir *Forty-five Years in China*, which was published in 1916, mentions neither Pope's poem nor *Tianlun shi* (Richard 1916). However, the preface of *Tianlun shi* highlights Pope's "savior-like concern" and his shared mission of "saving the world" (the phrase "救世-saving the world" appears ten times in the Chinese translation). Though Richard's intentions may not align perfectly with the meaning expressed in Pope's poem, it remains necessary to provide an explanation of Pope's ideas.

When writing this poem, Pope was influenced by Bolingbroke's theological and political ideas. Bolingbroke underwent a significant shift in his political alignment during the transition from the Stuart house to the Hanoverian house. Previously, he had supported James II and spent nine years in exile in France (1714–1723), where he associated with Voltaire and other intellectuals (Mori 2018, pp. 331–32). However, upon receiving a pardon in 1723 and returning to England, he was stripped of his titles and parliamentary seat due to his prior support for the deposed King. Subsequently, Bolingbroke founded a new political party advocating for political reform. From 1726 to 1735, Bolingbroke played a key role in founding *The Craftsman*, a magazine affiliated with the Tory party. He was one of the main contributors, alongside Swift and Pope, and the publication was established in opposition to the Whigs. Although the constitutional monarchy had been established after the ascension of George I, the monarch's role in political affairs had diminished with the rise of political parties. Bolingbroke's political theories played a significant role in shaping modern party politics, despite his repeated warnings about the perils of political parties and his encouragement of individuals to work for the common good of their community.



One of Bolingbroke's most notable and valuable works is "The Idea of a Patriot King" (1738) (Armitage 1997b, pp. 217–94), which forms a part of his series of political essays. In this work, Bolingbroke examines how political action can be organized under a "patriot king" to address the divisions and conflicts of party politics. It is uncertain whether, when translating *Tianlun shi*, Timothy Richard made any connections between British political history and the power struggle between the Empress Dowager Cixi's Faction and the Reformist Party after the First Sino–Japanese War (1894–1895).

Although the text of "The Idea of a Patriot King" is highly intricate, the final version we have today was published during Bolingbroke's exile in France. Some early versions were privately printed in England by Pope, and modern biographers have found evidence from these early printings and manuscripts that suggest Pope's involvement in the writing, editing, and publishing of "The Idea of a Patriot King" (Smallwood 1971, p. 241). The work places a number of demands on the patriot king, including that he be an opponent of corruption, a protector of the people, a moral exemplar, and a leader of a thriving commercial empire (Armitage 1997b, p. xxii).

Bolingbroke's work introduces the concept of a modern nation being depicted as a natural deity. In Pope's *An Essay on Man*, God is portrayed as the soul of the world, and the interconnectedness of all things through the great Chain of Being suggests that the world as a whole is itself God. Therefore, it is natural for individuals to extend their love from individuals to larger collective entities such as communities and nations. Frederick S. Troy points out that Pope's concept of "universal order" is excessively confused, as it combines elements of deistic rationalism (viewing the universe as a machine) and vitalistic pantheism when examined from a cosmological perspective (Troy 1960, p. 364). Bolingbroke's works also demonstrate a puzzling concept of a natural deity. Bolingbroke's later works emphasize a universalistic morality and the collective destiny of a community. He believed that individuals exist as integral parts of a self-sufficient whole, with the great Chain of Being connecting different social strata (Nohara 2011, p. 117). This is why Bolingbroke envisioned a nation as an abstracted form of the natural deity.

"The Idea of a Patriot King" is significant in intellectual history and has had a wide-ranging influence. According to David Armitage, the transformation from patriotism to nationalism is recognized as one of the grand narratives in 18th century British history, and the essay played a crucial role in this shift (Armitage 1997a, p. 397). Bolingbroke's utopian political ideals presented in the essay contributed to the eventual formation of modern political parties and the rise of nationalism, influencing political reforms in Britain from 1830 to 1832.

Given the significant role that Bolingbroke played in political thought and that played by Pope in literary history, I speculate that Richard's translation of *Tianlun shi* may contain important purposes or aims. Richard expressed his enduring aspiration to translate *An Essay on Man* as an introduction to Western poetry in the preface, and he further emphasized in the concluding section that his translation went beyond the bounds of poetics by incorporating practical knowledge ("shi xue" 實學) from the same tradition. Richard viewed the poem as an expression of harmony among people and emphasized that it aimed to transform hearts, not just bring delight. When Richard spoke of "practical knowledge" and "the transformation of the human heart," it is highly likely that he was referring to Christianity, natural theology, and Bolingbroke's political philosophy.

The extent to which Timothy Richard was influenced by Bolingbroke's ideas remains uncertain, and there are many questions surrounding his decision to publish the translation of *Tianlun shi* during the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898. It is unclear whether he was cognizant of Bolingbroke's political and theological works, which had a significant influence on British politics. During the Reform, there was a drive to shift away from conventional imperial autocracy and to establish a constitutional monarchy through political reform. Given the emergence of modern political parties and the ongoing status of monarchs in Britain during Bolingbroke's time, it is possible that Timothy Richard observed the significant transformation brought about by the constitutional monarchical system.

Moreover, it is unclear whether Timothy Richard fully subscribed to the concept of natural theology, for which Bolingbroke and others advocated. In the latter half of Bolingbroke's tumultuous political career, he maintained the belief that a nation such as Britain was akin to a "natural deity". Considering these viewpoints, Bolingbroke's nationalism appears to contradict the earlier mentioned universalism. This sharply contrasts with Richard, an Englishman who directly challenges British imperialism in his various discourses. It remains uncertain whether Timothy Richard shared any of Bolingbroke and Pope's ideas. Regrettably, without further evidence, it is currently difficult to provide more definitive answers to these questions. From my analysis, it seems that Richard held a fervent desire to bring about substantial transformations in Chinese politics during this period. Nevertheless, it is apparent that his goals were not achieved due to the failure of the reform efforts to yield the intended results.

Timothy Richard undeniably held a notable position in the late 19th century Chinese reforms, specifically during the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898. His memoir provides substantial evidence of his influential impact on two prominent reformers, Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929). Richard, in collaboration with Cai Erkang 蔡爾康 (1851–1921), translated American writer Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward* into Chinese, which was serialized in a newspaper in 1891 and later published as a book in 1894 (Bellamy 1888; Bellamy 1894). This literary work later served as a source of inspiration for Kang Youwei's utopian philosophical work *The Book of Great Unity* and Liang Qichao's futuristic novel *A Record of the Future of New China* (Yao 2023b, pp. 51–52). Before the Reform Movement's setback in 1898, Timothy Richard played a significant role as a spiritual mentor to Kang and Liang's Reform Party. In March 1895, when Richard called for essays regarding pushing the social reform in *Wanguo Gongbao* (*The Globe Magazine*), Kang Youwei submitted an article that achieved recognition and won a prize (Anonymous 1968, pp. 15095–96). Richard recorded in his memoir that on 17 October 1895, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao visited him at his residence in Beijing. Kang expressed to Richard his belief in "the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of nations" and his desire to cooperate with the Westerners in regenerating China (Richard 1916, p. 254). This meeting led Richard to become a founding member of the Qiang Xue Hui 強學會 (Society for the Study of National Strengthening) established by Kang, as noted by Hayton (Hayton 2020, p. 106). From late 1895 to early 1896, Liang Qichao served as Richard's personal secretary on a voluntary basis. Liang immersed himself in the books published by Timothy Richard and later curated a collection of reading materials for the reformists, which he presented to the Guangxu Emperor 光緒皇帝 (reigned 1875–1908). These Western learning books became crucial intellectual resources for promoting the Reform Movement. In summary, Richard maintained a close relationship with the Reform Party, and the Western learning books published by Richard and the Chinese Christian Society played a pivotal role in shaping the ideas of Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and other reformist intellectuals of that era. Therefore, it is plausible to speculate that in the initial phases of the Reform Movement, Richard was enthusiastic about releasing his Chinese translation of Pope's *An Essay on Man* and explicitly communicating to readers that the book contained practical knowledge ("shi xue" 實學), unequivocally emphasizing its tremendous significance. Unfortunately, due to the lack of adequate information, I am unable to engage in further speculation.

## 5. Conclusions

Leibniz discovered parallels to his own ideas through the study of Chinese works brought back to Europe by Jesuit missionaries in the 17th century. He described Neo-Confucianism as "the natural theology of the Chinese people". Accordingly, it is highly plausible that Bolingbroke, who was in exile in Europe, embraced Leibniz's ideas and subsequently influenced Pope. This could explain why some scholars during Pope's era found similarities between his cosmology and theology and those of Leibniz. Consequently, when Timothy and Ren translated Pope's poem using the discourse of Neo-Confucianism,

it is unclear how they perceived these shared concepts. Leibniz's ideas were original and not derived from Neo-Confucianism, and the same applies to Pope's ideas, which were not directly influenced by Leibniz or connected to Neo-Confucianism. Thus, within this two-century cycle of interpretation, Neo-Confucianism and natural theology emerged as subjects for comparative study.

In *Tianlun shi*, Neo-Confucianism and Christian theology coexist harmoniously. The poem complements Confucianism by incorporating the Christian concept of love, which transcends Confucian ethical ideas. From Jesuit missionaries to Protestant missionaries such as Young John Allen and Timothy Richard, there was an ongoing argument that the Chinese neglected the relationship between humans and the Creator, necessitating the introduction of "heavenly ethics" to compensate for these deficiencies in Chinese ethics. The concept of the "great Chain of Being" from *An Essay on Man* can be seamlessly integrated into the Neo-Confucian discourse of *Tianlun shi*, mainly through the utilization of ideas such as the unity of all things and the benevolence of this unity. Though the concept of the benevolence of the unity of all things has its roots in the Chinese tradition, it is enhanced by a Christian perspective on love, surpassing the materialistic arguments of Neo-Confucianism. Thus, the translators' adept fusion of Confucianism and Christianity within a Chinese poetic framework, through their adaptation of a Western poem and reinterpretation of Neo-Confucianism, gave rise to a truly unique and distinctive manifestation of Chinese Christian theology.

Moreover, the translation of *Tianlun shi* served multiple purposes beyond supplementing Confucianism. It also aimed to introduce Western learning and promote Christianity in China. Timothy Richard published this book at the onset of the late Qing reform, likely due to the historical and ideological connections between Pope's works and the British political reform movement. It can also be speculated that Bolingbroke's support for a constitutional monarchy and his theories regarding modern political parties influenced Timothy Richard's understanding of political reform during his era, leading to the translation of this poem.

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## Notes

- 1 Yan Fu's Chinese translation reads as follows: "往者樸伯以韻語賦《人道篇》數萬言，其警句云：'元宰有秘機，斯人特未悟；世事豈偶然，彼蒼審措注；乍疑樂律乖，庸如各得所；雖有偏沲災，終則其利溥；寄語傲慢徒，慎勿輕毀詛；一理今分明，造化原無過。'"
- 2 The Chinese translation of the couplet, according to Liu, could be "除舊不容甘我後，布新未要占人先". It was unknown which line of Pope's poem this couplet was derived from, as Liu did not clarify. I went through Pope's poem meticulously, but I couldn't locate the specific lines that corresponded to Yan Fu's translation.
- 3 This statement omits two important aspects of the Jesuit fathers' contributions to Chinese poetry. Firstly, the Chinese poem compositions by Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607), which predominantly feature original works rather than conventional translations. Secondly, the accomplishments of Louis Antoine de Poirot (1735–1813), who is acclaimed for his translation of the Bible into Chinese, incorporating the style of Chinese poetry, including the Psalms.
- 4 All translations in this article from Chinese to English are mine unless otherwise specified.
- 5 The numbers used here serve as abbreviations for chapters and sections in the Chinese translation, and the same convention applies below.

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